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**Paper Title:** “Here are the Gypsies!” The importance of self-representations & how to question prominent images of Gypsy minorities<sup>i</sup>

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## **Abstract**

Gypsy, Roma or traveller minorities remain a group that are still homogenised as the 'other'. The European imagination continues to be entrenched in the spectacle of their difference - images of weddings, musicians, funerals and fights are fascinating and are thus prioritised. But what would happen if the cameras were given to these people themselves? What if they became the image-makers? This article examines how ethnic studies might contribute to breaking the mould of the exoticised Gypsy through self-representations. The study here formed part of an ethnographic project amongst primary school pupils in Hungary. Using the photo elicitation method, children were given disposable cameras producing 451 photographs that then formed the basis of interviews. The results reveal very few indicators that could be described as significantly or distinctively divided into 'Gypsy' or 'non-Gypsy' identifications, questioning the status of difference in discourses around such minorities.

**Key words:** Gypsy, difference, self representations, photo elicitation, ethnography, Hungary

**“Here are the Gypsies!”**

In summer 2002 in a town in Central Hungary, along with two friends from Germany, I organised a photographic and history exhibition about the town’s Gypsy minority called locally *cigányok* or *Magyar cigányok* (‘Gypsies’ or ‘Hungarian Gypsies’)<sup>ii</sup>. The exhibition, titled *Mi szépek vagyunk!* (‘We are beautiful!’) was held in a youth centre near the main square. Prior to the exhibition, we met with the head of the youth centre, Erika, in order to create a poster advertising the event. We laid out some of the photographs we had taken on the table and Erika looked over them. She paused on one (left of figure 1 below), then tapped her finger beside it enthusiastically: “This one! This is it!” she said, looking at a picture of a group of grinning, mischievous looking children, “Here are the Gypsies!”

***Figure 1. Photographs from the exhibition ‘Mi szépek vagyunk’ [‘We are beautiful’]***

**[Figure 1 HERE]**

I remember us sitting there in silence for a few seconds, not sharing Erika’s enthusiasm, feeling slightly awkward. Just that morning the three of us had been in my flat, with all the photographs laid out, trying to choose a selection to take to the youth centre. We had looked at all the images, and then commented that they all seemed the same. They did – groups of cheeky looking children in poor surroundings, some with dishevelled clothing or bare feet on a dirt courtyard. Incongruous images seemed to have caught our eyes – a rose patterned table cloth fluttering next to a dilapidated wall, children taking a bath outdoors in an old wash-tub (see figure 1 above). It’s not that we had pre-arranged these shots, but it seemed we had captured similar images again and again. What had dispirited us, is that in a project in which we had tried to move away from stereotypical images of Gypsy people, we seemed to create our own. Erika’s enthusiasm and conviction that “here are the Gypsies!” just seemed to confirm the fact that we had, unwittingly, reproduced same-old representations.

### The ‘Gypsy’ image: the fancy dress choice

Same-old representations of Gypsies are common in the European imagination. Whether evoking Gypsy communities in fashion, media or literature, ‘Gypsy’ becomes akin to a fancy-dress costume. Historical examples are easy to find: the Esmeralda character in Hugo’s *Notre Dame de Paris* (1831), Mérimée’s *Carmen* (1845), and so on, up to cinematic works in Tony Gatliff’s *Gadjo Dilo* (1997) and *Transylvania* (2006) (Beller and Leerssen 2007, p.173). Here we might also add the 21<sup>st</sup> century trend of ‘boho chic’ that saw the likes of UK film star Sienna Miller dressed in “gypsy skirts” whilst pop-celebrities Ronnie Wood and Madonna throw Gypsy-themed birthday parties with brightly coloured fancy dress and decorations (*The Observer* 2009); whilst Brit super-model Kate Moss is photographed for a fashion shoot in *V Magazine* with a UK traveller community (2009). It seems for the famous and wealthy, dressing up as one of the poorest minorities to be found in Europe (rather like the trend for ‘favela chic’) connects them to a notion of the authentic ‘noble savage’, capable of both seduction and danger (Ellingson 2001, Freire-Medeiros 2009, p.581).

Running alongside this image of the ‘noble savage’, the Gypsy figure as the ‘bogeyman’ is never far behind. The UK’s Channel 4 recent series *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings* (2011) - with its focus on extravagant weddings in which dresses weighed more than the brides - provoked massive viewing figures<sup>iii</sup> alongside some of the most relentless, vitriolic press coverage of recent times, with one journalist summing up the media reaction by calling the show “eye-bulgingly, jaw-slackeningly mesmerising [...] pretty much like watching a David Attenborough documentary about the mating rituals of cavemen” (Farndale 2011). The ‘love to hate’ attitude towards Gypsy people is not a new phenomenon but one that reinvents itself, with reality TV as one such modern manifestation (Imre 2011).

Whether ‘noble savage’ or ‘bogeyman’, whether celebrations or denigrations, these representations of Gypsy base their viewpoint on the same pivot – Gypsy as different from majority society. And whilst researchers have sought to show alternative images of Gypsy communities, they also have tended to privilege ‘difference’ over any other characteristics, particularly encapsulated in the phrase “Gypsy way of life” (discussed later). As anthropologist Alaina Lemon points out, “it remains commonplace to define “Gypsy culture” only by features or practices that seem to isolate Gypsies from a majority” (2000, p.3).

With this backdrop it is not surprising that even well-intentioned projects espousing the heterogeneity of Gypsy groups can easily slip into homogenising talk about “the Gypsies” (Tremlett 2009b). Reviewing the ways we approach such minorities and considering whether alternative methods might allow us to rethink existing representations are thus pressing concerns. This article considers what academia – particularly ethnic and cultural studies - can offer in thinking through processes of representations and contribute to broader discourses on ‘Gypsy’ or ‘Roma’ minorities. Investigating the ordinary and everyday; focusing on self-representations; and including non-Gypsies in a comparative study - are all important methodological shifts for the study of such minorities that have not yet been widely employed. The focus is on what can happen when the camera is handed over to Gypsies themselves – when they become the image-makers.

### **Behind the camera: Gypsy and non-Gypsy children as image makers**

Considering the general acknowledgement of Gypsies as misrepresented, it remains surprising that very few studies have attempted to hand over the responsibility of representations to the people themselves<sup>iv</sup>. Photo elicitation is a method in which the cameras are handed to participants who can then photograph in their own time, choosing images without the presence of the researcher. The images then form the basis of an

interview, which is said to be especially useful when working with marginalised groups as it is described as an enabling methodology, "by fostering participation, these methodologies can be empowering, giving voice to those who may not otherwise be heard" (Guillemin and Drew 2010, p.177). This would follow the line of advice given by researchers from childhood studies who have advised that children have some autonomy over their representations "in order to enable children to participate on their own terms" (Thomas and O'Kane 1998, p.337)<sup>v</sup>.

The research under discussion here is a photography project that produced 451 images from all 19 children (6 Gypsy, 13 non-Gypsy) of the fourth grade of a primary school in the suburbs of a town in Central Hungary<sup>vi</sup>. The fourth grade children were aged 10-11 years and from similarly low socio-economic backgrounds<sup>vii</sup>. I did not foreground any particular identity as the primary focus of the research. To refer to '*cigányok*' (Gypsies) in Hungary can be a sensitive and often highly politicised subject area. And as I had discovered from the photo and history exhibition in 2002, slipping into a highly recognisable "here are the Gypsies!"-type of image was incredibly easy. As Joanou points out, researchers can easily induce children to produce images that "may look no different from images captured in sensationalised newsfeed or documentary film" (Joanou 2009, p.217). What I really wanted to know about was the life experiences of these children in school and with their families rather than any specific ethnic identity – moving away from the spectacular and towards the 'ordinary' or everyday (Miller and McHoul 1998, p. ix). This approach did not mean I gave up on looking at ethnicity or group identities, but that I took notice of all types of identity formations whilst keeping a keen eye and ear on when, where and how '*cigány*' became important (or was mentioned) in an everyday setting.

### *Limitations*

There are two major limitations to the study: firstly, a limitation in the focus on children and the small sample; and secondly a limitation of interpretation to wider notions of 'Gypsy'. Firstly, interpreting children's talk in the course of ethnographic research presents its own special caveats. The influence of the researcher, of the group setting, and the inconsistencies of individual responses create so many contingencies that any meaningful generalization may seem untenable (Buckingham 1991, p.243). However, this research follows in the steps of others who believe it is important to give children a voice in social research, with many researchers believing their voices are important in understanding social change (Morrow and Richards 1996, Livingstone and Lemish 2001, Hill 2006).

The small sample and imbalance of Gypsy/non-Gypsy numbers is defensible in that rigorous ethnographic work can only be done with a small sample, and here it made sense to include a whole class to limit other differences such as age or school experience. The Gypsy/non-Gypsy numbers in the fourth grade were similar to other grades in the school. Such an approach is further justified considering the strength of negative representations of Gypsies in public discourses, and the lack of close-up, comparative self-representational projects such as photo elicitation. The results are not meant to be generalisable to all Gypsy and non-Gypsy people – in fact, the analysis aims to investigate such common generalisations. It is the methodological approach and discussion on the status of 'difference' that are aimed at being applicable to other sites, rather than the empirical findings (Small 2009, p.9).

The second major area to consider is the interpretation of research material. In this analysis, the children's photographs are compared along Gypsy/non-Gypsy lines, posing the obvious danger of inadvertently substantiating the notion of 'difference' the analysis

attempts to investigate. To link local ethnic groups to wider discourses on those groups is problematic in that it can serve to force comparisons, and ultimately create alliances rather than explore them (Appadurai 1998). Academics from Romani studies have been acutely aware of this problem, and have sought to get round it by declaring their work to be only defining the specific cultural characteristics of specific groups: "In my own ethnographic work I carefully spoke only of so-called 'Vlach' Gypsy (i.e. Romany speaking, Hungarian citizens)" writes Michael Stewart about his 1997 monograph *Time of the Gypsies* (Stewart 2001, p. 3); Judith Okely makes it clear her research was on English traveller-Gypsies (1983); Paloma Gay y Blasco writes specifically about the Gitanos in Spain (1999). Whilst these anthropologists have brought notions of heterogeneity to the historically complex, and frequently contentious term 'Gypsy', I have argued elsewhere that heterogeneity has been inadequate in properly confronting stereotypes, and has frequently served to (unintentionally) reinforce the idea of 'the Gypsies' as ultimately different from majority society (Tremlett 2009b, further examined in the next section).

Using the categories 'Gypsy' and 'non-Gypsy' to group the children in this study is therefore problematic and could be seen as pre-empting or fixing their own sense of identities. The Gypsy children in this study were known to me through my previous 'pre-PhD' work in the local area, and every so often conversations about their background would occur, showing that at times the children themselves thought of their backgrounds as 'Gypsy' or sometimes 'Hungarian Gypsy'. However, this did not mean that they necessarily had a fixed or specific culture which differentiated them from their non-Gypsy peers, and I was interested in how their identifications would emerge in a research situation in which the 'everyday' was emphasised over any specific identity. In the analysis, I use the labels 'Gypsy' and 'non-Gypsy' as broad, existing categories in order to investigate the strong assumption of difference in literature on Gypsies. The imposition



of these terms should not lead the reader to assume they relate to an essentialised 'Gypsy' or 'non-Gypsy' identity, and in fact, the whole point of the research is to explore these assumptions. The strength of public and academic discourses on the Gypsy/non-Gypsy divide gives some justification for imposing such labels on the children's photographs, in order to explore group distinctions. Whilst this may give only one side of the images, it is at least fulfilling an important element of photo elicitation projects, which is to be concerned with the interpretation of visual data, involving knowledge about the political, social and cultural contexts in which data will be viewed (Pink 2007). As Pieterse writes about images of black people in Western popular culture: "Obviously, what is at stake in these representations is not just the images themselves but also their social ramifications" (Pieterse 1992, p.11).

#### *The 'Gypsy way'*

For the purposes of this article, the focus of the analysis is on seeing how the children's photographs can be 'read' according to existing literature, on which I will now elaborate. The academic field, Romani studies, has been criticised for over-focusing on what is authentically 'Gypsy', causing research on Gypsy people to be seen as irrelevant to other strands of academic research (Willems 1997: 305-306). Even in sensitive, well-intentioned research that reveals complexities such as inter-group conflicts or cross-kinship variations, such as by Budilová and Jakoubek, the ultimate framing is still a Gypsy/non-Gypsy divide:

In our concern with the topic of engagement in relation to Roma/Gypsy groups, we stress the fact that our most important responsibility towards our informants is to become occupied with their own interests, notions and their own view of the world, which should be subsequently mediated to the 'other world', that of the non-Roma/non-Gypsies (Budilová and Jakoubek 2009, pp.6-7)

This causes Romani studies to be limited in its framing, as the concern becomes the description of Gypsy groups to the 'other world' of non-Gypsies, at the expense of ignoring or glossing over links to other ethnic, cultural or socio-economic groups. Willems says this has "unjustly overshadowed the far richer and more complex reality of Gypsy life and Gypsy integration into diverse communities" (Willems 1997, p. 15).

One such way that the specific slips into the general is in descriptions of the 'Gypsy way'. The phrase 'Gypsy way' has been used in anthropological literature to talk about how there are Gypsy ways of doing everyday activities (see 'Gypsy way' in Liégeois 1986, p.85; 'way of being' in Gay y Blasco 1999, p.176; 'independent way' in Okely 1983, p.77; 'Gypsy way' in Stewart 1997, p.17-94). Through the 'Gypsy way', a mode of living is described that is distinct from the non-Gypsy, creating "a place of their own in which they could feel at home" (Stewart 1997, p.28). The 'place of their own' is defined as continually reinforced through work, home and family connectedness in everyday life, meaning that Gypsy people live to strict rules that lie in opposition to majority society. There is a focus on particularly close family relationships, antagonistic attitudes to other Gypsy or non-Gypsy groups, distinctive home decorations and work ethics: "From the Gitano's point of view, it is their 'way of being' (*manera de ser*) that separates them from and makes them better than the Payos [non Gypsies]" (Gay y Blasco 1999, p.174 [my insertion]). Such declarations, however accompanied they are with detailed descriptions of the specific groups, nevertheless affirm the common stereotype that (all) Gypsy groups are distinct and different from the entire (seemingly monolithic) non-Gypsy population.

There are alternative voices that are beginning to question notions of 'difference' used to describe Gypsy minorities, from sociologists investigating everyday constructions of 'others' as Gypsy (Ladányi and Szelényi 2006) to ethnographers questioning the trope of difference used within Gypsy communities (Lemon 2000, Theodosiou 2011, Durst 2011), whilst various critics are using anti-essentialist theorisations that can investigate emerging

hybrid Gypsy identities informed by political, cultural and regional changes (Trehan and Kóczé 2009, Rughiniş 2010, Imre 2011, van Baar 2011). Nevertheless, the image of Gypsy people as essentially different from non-Gypsy is still pervasive, and in studies of children at school the term "Gypsy socialisation" to denote the particular process of becoming essentially different from non-Gypsy is still widely used (e.g. Forray 2003, Lukács 2008, Levinson 2008, Vanderbeck 2009). With strong claims made about the 'Gypsy way' as based on a different way of living from non-Gypsy, this leads us to approach the children's data with an expectation that 'difference' between Gypsy and non-Gypsy will be found.

### **Results and analysis: When is 'difference' so different?**

The photographs were first categorised into subject matter, and then numbers of photographs in each category were compared according to ethnic and gender groups. Trends from the initial results (Table (1) below) do indicate that the hypotheses produced from literature on the 'Gypsy way' were correct in the sense that in most of the categories (5 out of 8), Gypsy/non-Gypsy groups of children appeared to take different numbers of photographs in different categories. Gypsy children could be seen as taking more photographs in a category deemed central to the 'Gypsy way' (i.e. 'Family at home') and not in categories deemed alien to the 'Gypsy way' (i.e. 'Friends at school'/'Domestic animals'). What the initial review of the results do not show us is whether these trends can be considered statistically significant.

Statistical significance tests were conducted on the photographic data to determine whether the differences in the number of photographs taken by ethnic and gender groupings shown in Table (1) below could be considered significant. The volume of photographs (451) allowed a sufficient sampling size to justify the use of a statistical test

to compare the numbers of photographs. Numbers of photographs taken by Gypsy versus non-Gypsy pupils were compared in each category, whilst also taking into account demographic differences such as gender and sibling numbers (one or less versus two or more). However, the numbers of photographs taken by the smaller sub-groups such as ethnic-gender groupings, i.e. Gypsy girl, Gypsy boy, non-Gypsy girl, non-Gypsy boy were very small, limiting the power of the analyses. The statistical testing was carried out under the advice and supervision of a personal contact familiar with the use of statistics<sup>viii</sup>.

**[TABLE (1) HERE]**

In the ensuing statistical analysis of the types of content of photographs taken by different ethnic and gender groups<sup>ix</sup>, the results show no statistical significance between Gypsy and non-Gypsy children in each photographic category of this project. Furthermore, where a statistical significance is apparent, is in fact between gender groups in one category, 'family at home'. This category was the most important both in terms of the over-representation of 'family at home' in comparison to any other category (41% of the photographs - 184 out of 451 - featured 'family at home'), along with the fact that literature on Gypsy minorities often cites 'home' as the central heart of Gypsy identity and reproduction of the 'Gypsy way' (see Okely 1983, Stewart 1997, Gay y Blasco 1999).

A statistically significant difference simply means there is statistical evidence that there is a difference. It does not mean the difference is necessarily large, important or significant, in the usual sense of the word (Thompson 1994, p.1). The results are therefore only one indication. Nevertheless, the results do show that on a dimension where we might, at least according to the existing literature, assume Gypsy identity to be at its strongest, in fact it was gender difference that appeared more salient.

The oral representations produced by the children in the interviews did not bring up 'Gypsy'-type labelling frequently. Across the 19 interviews (totalling 7 hours and 37 minutes) the word *cigány* (*Gypsy*) was used 11 times in total. This leaves the majority of the interviews with no direct references to Gypsy<sup>x</sup>.

The three themes that came up frequently in the interviews were: family relations; relationships with young relatives; and television viewing. In theme one ('family relations') the majority of children spoke about their families and most described frequent meetings between extended family members, for example on the advantages and disadvantages of living with extended family as opposed to living with just immediate family:

Márta (non-Gypsy girl): Here I'm not always bored, but... there were ten there, ten relatives altogether[...]when I was bored, then there was always someone to play with

Balázs (Gypsy boy): It's really boring. If someone doesn't come round, then I can't play with anyone[...]Nearly all my cousins lived there, and I could go over to theirs, we played football as well

Other children expressed particular affiliation to one parent for example their father; and others spoke of the arguments within their families:

Sophia (non-Gypsy girl): My dad is really really really clever with his hands, because it's true that they [other family members] often quarrel with my dad, but I really love him, and he's really skilful, he can do really really nice work. Just sometimes he's quarrelsome...

Csilla (Gypsy girl): I don't often go to theirs! [looking at a photograph of her mother's sister]

AT: Why not?

Csilla: Well because at the moment we're on bad terms.

AT: Why?

Csilla: Well **I** go over to theirs quite a lot, it's just my mum who doesn't.

So whilst talk of families did feature in all of the interviews, there was not one common way in which all children or different ethnic groups talked about them, apart from an over-arching sense of extended families as being intimately engaged (whether positively or negatively) in each other's lives.

Theme two ('younger relatives') could have brought up some differences between ethnic-gender groupings, as academics report that the 'Gypsy way' of Gypsy child relations with siblings, places the relationship firmly in terms of close family ties and expectations of parents on their older children (especially girls). Girls are expected to be involved in the running of the family. (see Berecsei & Dunbar 2002, p.804; Havas, Kemény & Liskó 2002, p. 152). Here I found that whilst most children expressed close bonds with their younger siblings or relatives (see figure 2 below), this did not come with strong roles of responsibility. Only two children (both girls, one Gypsy child and one non-Gypsy child) expressed bonds in terms of having a role of responsibility<sup>xi</sup> – and even then, this was not attached to parental expectation but rather seemed to come from their own desires to have a role of authority over their siblings.

***Figure 2: Pictures of younger relatives that stimulate talk about their relationships***

**[Figure 2 HERE]**

The third theme that proved popular in the interviews was around television programmes. Lengthy conversations were stimulated by photographs taken of television sets – some of which were attempts to photograph a particular show. Whilst the children spoke of a range of television programmes they liked, there was one show that 18 out of the 19 children professed to watch and enjoy – a new reality show entitled *Győzike* which featured a Gypsy pop star and his family in the style of the MTV show *The Osbournes*. In

terms of the interest of this analysis, conversations around *Győzike* had the potential to stimulate the children's talk to notions of ethnicity, as the show had been heavily marketed on a kind of 'ethnic kitsch' and had garnered huge and mostly negative press coverage (Imre and Tremlett 2011).

Even in talk around *Győzike* a Gypsy/non-Gypsy divide between expressions of viewing experience was not apparent. The children, whilst delighting in the entertainment afforded by chaotic family scenes, revealed a potential gender divide in the degree of difference in their readiness to identify with on-screen characters. The girls were keen to liken themselves to their favourite TV show's character and his family, whereas the boys, whilst still finding it funny, positioned themselves as 'better' than *Győzike*'s family, or just completely different. This gender divide could indicate the children's budding sense of the distinct hierarchies and spaces assigned to men and women in Hungary – the girls showing a stronger investment in applying the domestic arena to their own lives, whereas the boys could be becoming aware of their roles to determine the existence of 'others' within the national arena (see Tremlett, forthcoming).

In the interviews, it appeared that there could be elements of the 'Gypsy way' in the manner that children spoke about families as close-knit and relationships with younger relatives. However, it would take a big leap to say that a 'Gypsy way' was typical of the way Gypsy children described their lives, as it would be false to say that elements of the 'Gypsy way' were absent from non-Gypsy children's descriptions. 'Gypsy' in the sense of strongly defined groups of people with different ways of living, or different physical characteristics, was not a representation put forward by the children as a recurring theme across the interviews.

This leads on to the question of what the quantitative analysis and summary of the children's interviews do not tell us, whether the pictures had a certain Gypsy 'look' about

them. Did the homes in the pictures or the people posing in them have a 'Gypsy way' about them? A visual analysis of the images looks beyond the subject matter of the photographs, and onto the question of Gypsy 'taste', important because of the strong visual aspect of representations of Gypsy people in both anthropological descriptions and wider public images. As shown in the opening to the paper, the way Gypsies look and live as 'different' to majority society is a prominent media representation, and is matched by strong claims in academic texts about their distinctive dress and home environments that is termed 'Gypsy taste'. A very vivid example of such a description is in Stewart's ethnographic monograph *Time of the Gypsies* (1997), also based in Hungary. Stewart describes this "Gypsy taste and style" using flamboyant and excessive imagery that is gently mocking of the extrovert style, noting the "outrageously gaudy" paint; "shiny and glittering" décor; "fancy trinkets" on display; and "gaudy rose-patterned cloths". Gypsy taste appears vivid, with a sense of kitsch fun (Stewart 1997, p. 31-32). These are very similar images to general notions of 'Gypsy taste', as distinctive, bright, and lavish, that most people would recognise thanks to strong representations used in the media or fashion industry.

In my analysis, I looked at the 247 photographs depicting home and compared the style displayed in the homes with this so-called 'Gypsy taste'. From the 247 photographs, 22 photographs from 8 children, 4 Gypsy and 4 non-Gypsy, could be said to show elements of this 'Gypsy taste'. However, in the majority of the homes these elements of 'Gypsy taste' could not be said to be ubiquitous, rather, they could be seen in a more low-key manner in homes across the ethnic groupings, and actually were not found in all Gypsy family homes (see figures 3 and 4 below).

***Figure 3. Some evidence of 'Gypsy taste' (top two from non-Gypsy children, bottom two from Gypsy children)***  
**[Figure 3 HERE]**



***Figure 4. Lack of evidence of 'Gypsy taste' in Gypsy and non-Gypsy homes (top two from 'non-Gypsy' children, bottom two from 'Gypsy' children)***  
**[Figure 4 HERE]**

In fact, the one 'classic' example of a 'typical Gypsy taste' home was from Sára, a non-Gypsy child (see figure 5 below), which conformed to what Stewart says, "mock-teak wall-to-wall cupboard, with every foot of shelf space used for display of porcelain "valuables" and fancy trinkets", where "Saints jostle with nudes"(Stewart 1997, p.32-33). Yet in 15 months of fieldwork, I had never heard Sára express any affiliation to being 'Gypsy', and no one had talked of her as coming from a Gypsy family. In the interview, when we looked through these pictures, my attempts to ask her to explain why she took these photographs or why her grandma decorates her room in such a manner received low-key comments such as "I like my grandma's ornaments"; "my gran collects these"; "we give them to her for her name day" and some giggling and pointing at the lady's exposed nipple in the painting (see figure 5 below).

The results of the project unsettle the notion that Gypsy and non-Gypsy identities are always so contrasting as fixed opposites, whilst other differences (e.g. gender/class status) are shown as potentially more salient than ethnicity for looking at the way these children represented their daily lives.

***Figure 5. The best example of 'Gypsy taste' – from a non-Gypsy girl's photographs***

**[Figure 5 HERE]**

**Conclusion**

When working with highly stereotyped individuals the danger becomes to focus the lens on the spectacular at the exclusion of the ordinary. Whilst the images shown here come from children's representations of their everyday lives, I suggest they would not hold much interest for romologists or public discourses on Gypsy minorities precisely because

they are not instantly recognisable as something 'Gypsy'. This in itself is very significant and questions why there is such a stubborn insistence of Gypsy people as always being dramatically (stunningly) different.

There is an argument from Romani studies that could be made with regards to my analysis and commentary on the lack of a strong Gypsy identity in the children's visual and oral representations. A footnote from Stewart's work suggests that I could be suffering from a type of 'cultural blindness' that is similar to the argument from Cultural studies of 'colour blindness' – a politically correct naïve hope that we are, in fact, all 'equal' (Mirza 2000: 296). The following quote comes after an explanation of 'Gypsy work' as primarily centred on identity rather than social or economic necessity (Stewart 1997: 26). In defence of his argument, Stewart writes:

Piasere (1984, p.137) rightly criticized another author who "wanted at any price to 'rehabilitate' the Gypsies among the non-Gypsies [by] pretending not to have noticed their 'happy indolence'"

(Stewart 1997: footnote 11, p.257) [my insertion]

Criticisms of my analysis could therefore say that I am playing down or ignoring differences in order that Gypsies do not stand out as 'different' and to appease political correctness. However, I have argued in this article that my data does not show evidence that there is no difference – in fact there were traces of difference. The data from the children's visual and oral representations has shown that, whilst trends for Gypsy/non-Gypsy difference may be present, other differences seemed more compelling - for example the differences between genders. My argument is not about wiping out difference altogether, nor denying that difference exists, or pretending that there is no racism. Rather it is a critique of the idea that difference is always at the root of how Gypsy and non-Gypsy people live their lives.

As researchers we need to think carefully about what we capture in the process of data production and why. Whilst recognising the dangers of extrapolating from ethnographic research (particularly with children) and the difficulties in relating local groups to broader ethnicised discourses, these caveats are the precise reasons why close-up, in-depth, comparative research that attends to the self-representations of such essentialised groups and their peers or neighbours is so vital. The results of the photography project are a small contribution, but they do unsettle the notion that the fundamental relationship between Gypsy and non-Gypsy people should always be framed as based on distinctive group difference. My argument is not about refusing difference altogether, nor denying that difference exists. This is not a call to “‘rehabilitate’ the Gypsies among the non-Gypsies[...]at any price” (Stewart 1997, p. 257), but rather to investigate the significance accorded to ‘difference’ and to encourage a methodological awareness in the approach and framing of research on such stigmatised minorities.

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<sup>i</sup>There are an estimated 12 million Gypsy people across Europe, with the majority residing in Central and Eastern Europe. 'Roma' is the European institutional preferred umbrella term, but is often rejected by activists and at a local level because many groups still identify as 'Gypsies' (Gay y Blasco 2002, Mayall 2004, Szuhay 2005). In this article I use 'Gypsy' as a translation of the Hungarian word '*cigány*' as this is how the participants self-identified.

<sup>ii</sup> In Hungary, although there are no reliable statistics, about 5% of the population are said to be of Gypsy origin, with three main groups: Hungarian Gypsies (65-75% of the Gypsy population); Vlach Rom (20-30%); and Beás or Romanian Gypsy (5-10%) (Roma in Hungary, 1998).

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<sup>iii</sup> With a consolidated figure of over 8 million viewers, *Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* is in the top ten of UK broadcaster Channel 4's highest-rating programmes ever (Frost 2011).

<sup>iv</sup> For example Charlotte Dean reports on a community project using photographs taken by UK English travellers (2007); whilst Krista Harper's ongoing work uses photo-voice to look at the environment in which Romani people live in Hungary (2009).

<sup>v</sup> This was also important because of my status as 'less-than-fluent' in the language and cultural practices of my research participants (discussed in-depth in Tremlett 2009a).

<sup>vi</sup> Ethical consent was sought from the participating children and their parents in accordance with UK ethical guidelines. The children were verbally explained the purpose of the project, both as a group and individually. Once the photographs were developed, the children were also asked if there were any photographs they would not be happy to be shown to a wider audience, and some were highlighted which have not been used. Signed ethical consent forms were obtained from at least one parent of all participating children which stated that the images may be used in wider material, but that all names would be changed.

<sup>vii</sup> The study was conducted in 2004/5 in a small school of approximately 120 pupils on the outskirts of a city of about 100,000 people in the 'Southern Great Plain' (*Dél-Alföld*) region of Hungary. The children were from similar local, low socio-economic backgrounds, with the school records showing that the majority of children (nearly 60%) came from families who were in need of some government assistance. Approximately 20-30% of the school's pupils were from a 'Hungarian Gypsy' (*Magyar cigány*) background. Whilst a few of these families were amongst the poorest attending the school, not all Hungarian Gypsy families were in this category, and there were some non-Gypsy families who were also deemed extremely poor in school records.

<sup>viii</sup> The statistical analyses were carried out with the advice and supervision of Dr Helen Tremlett, assistant professor at the University of British Columbia in the Faculty of Medicine, Divisions of Neurology and Health Care and Epidemiology, Canada.

<sup>ix</sup> The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 15 was used for statistical analyses. The non-parametric Mann-Whitney-U test was used to compare the proportion and number of photos taken within each category between Gypsy versus non-Gypsy children and between boys versus girls. A  $p < 0.05$  was considered significant (Munro 2005, pp.123-126). No adjustments were made for multiple testing. This increases the risk of a type I error (Rothman 1990, pp.43-36). However, the previous absence of research into self-representations of Gypsy and non-Gypsy children using photographic methods provides some justification for this approach. In addition, correction for multiple testing can increase the risk of type II errors (Perneger 1998: 1236-1238). A full exposition with all the relevant test-results can be read in Tremlett 2008.

<sup>x</sup> 'Hungarian' was also not often used, in fact across the interviews there were also 11 uses: three children used 'Hungarian' (to mean the Hungarian language) six times with reference to the way the pop star 'Gyözike' talked (star of the reality show of the same name). Csilla, who used *cigány* the most, also used 'Hungarian' the most, with five references to Hungarian people when talking about conflicts with her neighbour.

<sup>xi</sup> It could have been the case that these children were too young (aged 10/11 years) to be expected to have the role of a carer. However, in literature on the 'Gypsy way', awareness of the gendered role of girls and boys in Gypsy families is said to begin from birth (Stewart 1997, p.52-53).